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**SANTA ANA-** A hard working youth who grew up in an entrepreneurial family has been named California's Small Business Person of the Year. Hal Hays, the owner of [Hal Hays Construction, Inc.](#), in Riverside, will join other small business owners and entrepreneurs from across the country at the U.S. Small Business Administration's (SBA) [National Small Business Week](#) event set for May 23-25 in Washington, D.C. Small business owners and entrepreneurs from across the country will be honored for their accomplishments as the nation's leading small businesses. The highlight of events will be the announcement of the National Small Business Person of the Year.

Hays will also be honored locally at the [47th Annual Small Business Week Awards](#) luncheon on June 2nd at the Embassy Suites - Anaheim South in Garden Grove.

Hays competed against a strong field of candidates at the district level (Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino counties), then was selected as the state honoree from a pool of five other California district winners. Hays will represent the state and compete for national honors during National Small Business Week in D.C. in May.

Growing up around forests in California where his father was a timber contractor, Hays knew how to use heavy equipment to construct and maintain roads while still a teenager. At 20, he ran his own logging crews of men sometimes twice his age. After working with timber firms in the Southwest and South America, Hays returned to California and obtained a General Engineering Contractor's License. In 1990, following a successful 21 year-long career in his family's timber business, Hal Hays founded Hal Hays Forestry, with one bulldozer, one excavator and one truck, and began work in forestry services, trucking services, road rehabilitation, wildland firefighting, and burned ecosystems rehabilitation.

Hays met his future wife, Denise, in 1998, while on a plane headed to Nevada. They married two years later and set out to grow the business by combining their talents and expertise. With hard work and the SBA's help, they were able to do just that. In 2002, Hal and Denise incorporated Hal Hays Construction, Inc. (HHCI) and became [8\(a\)](#) certified. Two years later, they also earned certification into SBA's [HUBZone](#) program. These programs allowed the firm to design and build award winning projects, including: child development centers, airfields & runways, fire stations, historical building renovations, major roadways, concrete bomb targets and green buildings. Many of the firm's projects have earned safety and project awards, LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) designations and outstanding performance evaluations.

Through the SBA 8(a) and HUBZone programs, Hays was able to expand his client base to include many federal agencies, including: the Army Corps of Engineers, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Coast Guard, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, Department of Transportation, Department of Veterans Affairs, and NASA.

Recently, the firm earned over 12 [Recovery Act](#)-funded projects, which will potentially employ more than 50 new hires as well as retain over 35 of the firm's existing field and corporate employees. The firm has offices in Riverside, San Diego, Sacramento, Yuma and El Paso and operates in five states.

HHCI's extensive in-house equipment, self-performing crews and rapid mobilization help deliver cost savings and early project completions to clients, which has led to consistent and sustained growth. Three years after HHCI was founded, the company had 32 employees and \$5.2 million in sales. By 2009, the firm had grown to 120 employees with \$32.6 million. In fact, HHCI has successfully delivered to federal agencies over 400 multi-disciplinary projects valued at over \$142 million.

Another area in which Hays and HHCI excel is in helping the community through the use of their time and resources. HHCI's community contributions in the form of monetary and service support total more than \$1.8 million to 21 nonprofit organizations to date. Examples of projects supported include: Riverside's Mission Inn Run, care packages to employee's military relatives currently deployed overseas, local high school sports teams, and various faith institutions throughout Southern California.

Registration for the awards luncheon is available at [www.2010smallbizweek.eventbrite.com](http://www.2010smallbizweek.eventbrite.com).

National Small Business Week information is available at [www.nationalsmallbusinessweek.com](http://www.nationalsmallbusinessweek.com).

Additional information about the 47th Annual Small Business Week Awards luncheon is available by contacting [christopher.lorenzana@sba.gov](mailto:christopher.lorenzana@sba.gov) or 714.560.7453.

Information about the U.S. Small Business Administration is available at [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov).